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CONTRAPUNTOS LATINO-AFRICANOS: OPERATION ANTONIO MACEO AND THE MISTS OF BENGUELA BAY

ABSTRACT

The essay provides a phenomenological analysis of 'Operation General Antonio Maceo,' the military offensive that took place in southern Angola between January and April 1976 to ensure the retreat of South African troops towards Namibia. By peeling away the historical, social and cultural contexts layered around the symbolism of the "Bronze Titan" (second-in-command of the Cuban Army of Independence), the aim is to reveal the structures and meanings interwoven into the concept of 'Latin-African' that was articulated by Fidel Castro as the historical-biological-cultural imperative legitimating Havana's decision to send thousands of Cuban internationalists to Angola shortly after the outbreak of that country's civil war. This experiential approach allows us to read the operation as a re-telling of national life, thus unveiling the more shaded qualities of collective experience that can otherwise elude us.

The Shakespearian drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the sub-plot which copies the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight.

– W. B. Yeats

1. Prologue

If you trace a line with your finger across a map from Luanda west across the Atlantic Ocean, you end up at the site of the longest-surviving *quilombo* (runaway slave settlement) in Brazil -- Quilombo dos Palmares in the state of Alagoas.

Countercurrently, if you begin at the Baia dos Todos os Santos in Salvador, known to be

Brazil's most 'African' city, and move straight across eastwards, you will arrive at the spot on the Angolan littoral where lies Benguela, which, by the eighteenth century, had come to rival Luanda as the major port through which enslaved Africans were shipped to the New World. Through as simple an exercise as this, we learn that the invisible lines of historical and cultural connection linking together peoples in the Americas and Africa often correspond in a surprisingly direct fashion to the imaginary circles of latitude and longitude shaping maritime sea-routes. Furthermore, by perceiving that the natural world helps organize social relationships, we gain insight into how geographical features often serve as reflections or manifestations of what can be understood as 'emotional ecosystems.' The notion of an emotional ecology stems from our knowledge that the human world functions according to networks of interaction among individuals and between individuals and their environment that are predominantly focused upon the emotions: "It is these emotional interactions therefore that constitute the emotional ecosystem of the group."¹ While, admittedly, the concept of ecology cannot be uncritically transferred from the natural to the social sciences, integrated approaches to the study of social-ecological systems have contributed greater tools for understanding how ethnically and racially diverse societies (in particular) function, and have shaped the recent emergence of the field of environmental humanities research.²

One of the principal notions arising within ecological studies is that of resilience, which in the natural environment refers to an ecosystem's capacity to recover from the onslaught of adverse conditions and changes, whilst at the psychological level it can indicate either adaptability or long-term resistance to change. Indeed, it is this latter connotation, bound up with technological qualities of resilience (such as can be observed in a given material's ability to revert to its original form after deformation or assault), that serves as the contextual matrix within which our analysis of the psychical

qualities of Operation Antonio Maceo occurs. Paying attention to these more nebulous aspects through a type of ‘Thematic Amplification’— the experiential research device advocated by Sunnie D. Kidd and James W. Kidd – can allow us to examine what lies beneath political rhetoric, and help us to arrive at an understanding of more primordial meanings and social referents.³ As philosophers Kidd and Kidd put it, amplification “works somewhat like time-lapsed photography where slowing down time reveals processes which we cannot see in a single grasp by the human eye. In microphotography a whole new world is found to exist inside another.”⁴ In a similar vein, Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, reflecting upon the “emotion of multitude” as a dramatic device in the plays of Shakespeare, paid tribute to the strength and importance of “the half-seen world” or subplot, which he recognized as “the main plot working itself out in more ordinary men and women.”⁵ It is this recognition that themes often permeate through different levels of human experience that aligns Yeats’s literary approach with the scholarly path I take into the shadows that continue to enshroud Cuban actions in Angola.

From this penumbral perspective it is possible to deduce that the notably ‘Cuban feel’ of Benguela – even today – emanates not solely from the distinctive architectural style of the ‘*prédios*’ (high-rises) built by workers from the construction brigade (the other two humanitarian brigades were made up of medical personnel and teachers, respectively),⁶ nor the art-deco theatres that bring the cityscapes of Santa Clara or Santiago to mind (in other words, the man-made features), but, equally, from the impenetrable belt of fog produced when the cold Benguela Current meets the warm descending air from inland.⁷ These sea mists produced by two competing elements, similar to the contrapuntal ‘Latin-African’ identity that Fidel Castro claimed as his compatriots’ birthright, endowing them with a duty to serve not only their homeland

but, equally, the largest of Portugal's former African colonies. An identity by turns as impenetrable, treacherous, confusing, and ethereal as the mists themselves.

Our focus, in this essay, will veer from theorizing on Operation Carlota, the first of the Cuban missions, during which the concept of Latin-Africa first emerged,⁸ to an assessment of the symbolism of Operation General Antonio Maceo, the military offensive that took place in southern Angola between January and April 1976 to ensure the retreat of South African troops towards Namibia. It centered upon the capture of the main towns along the Benguela Railway line, and the most decisive manoeuvres in the campaign were when Cuban troops joined forces with FAPLA (Popular Armed Forces of Angolan Liberation) to take over the ports of Lobito and Benguela on February 10. In the end, the operation was triumphantly declared by Havana to be “the second liberation war,”⁹ Operation Carlota being the first. I propose that by applying the twin beams of historical and cultural contextualization, we can start to discern more acutely what it meant for Cubans to be “*latino-africanos*” in the late 1970's.

Cuban policy for Angola went through a number of transformations during the 15-year mission. In part, this arose from a need to adapt to changing circumstances ‘on the ground,’ and partly it developed as idealism gave way to pragmatism, and then, arguably (in some quarters) to cynicism. However, when viewed through the lens of ‘resilience’—understood here to be the quality of returning to an original form in spite of perturbations, as I outlined above—it is possible to detect the enduring (and unsettling) “half-life” of ordinary experience that seethed beneath at the same that it reinforced the shifting politics of internationalism in Angola.

2. “The history of slavery is the history of slave resistance”¹⁰

In the framework of the African-Atlantic world that I evoked in only the barest geographical traces at the beginning of this essay, Angola stands out as the supplier of the majority of slaves to the Spanish and Portuguese territories in the New World, mainly to Brazil, but a sizeable proportion also to Cuba.¹¹ And because those two states were the last in the Western world to abolish slavery (Cuba in 1886 followed two years later by Brazil in 1888), not to mention the illegal trade that continued for many years after, the African cultural element is considered to have persisted in these two nations more so than in any others in the Americas.

The term *quilombo* is most typically used in Brazil to denote a community of resistance founded by runaway slaves. The term in Spanish is *palenque*. While each one varied from the others in its individual size and level of organization, collectively they constituted by far the biggest and most vexing threats to the colonial Spanish and Portuguese authorities, who were forced to invest sizeable quantities of manpower and firepower in attempts to wipe out these pockets of rebellion that were located in the most inhospitable and difficult spots to access. Although we know that over a thousand *quilombos* existed dotted around the Brazilian landscape at any one time, the longevity, as well as the sheer size of Quilombo dos Palmares has made it legendary.¹² A settlement of maroons was first noted in that area in the official records in about 1600, and reports were that in addition to escaped enslaved Africans, it was home to marginalized and mixed-race individuals, so-called mulattoes and *caboclos*, some indigenous peoples and poor whites, as well as a significant number of Portuguese soldiers trying to escape forced military service.

Of a similar stature in the Afro-Latin imaginary, but in the Cuban context, El gran Palenque de Moa, was situated in the mountains of Oriente province in the eastern part of the island, and claims are that around three hundred men, women and children

dwelled communally in this region reaping benefits from the prevalent caves that offered an ample number of hideouts. This settlement flourished in the 1800's during an era when plantation slavery had increased dramatically following the triumph of the Haitian revolution in 1804, which allowed Cuba to become the largest sugar producer in the world.¹³

The Latin-African identity that Fidel Castro claimed as justification for Cuba's mission in the former Portuguese colony, Angola, has its ideological roots in this history of slave resistance in the Americas, supporting the establishment of the individual rebellious slave leader as an important national symbol. Thus, Operation Carlota, the most famous of the Cuban military missions in the Angolan civil war, was named after an enslaved African woman, who led a slave rebellion in Triunvirato, Matanzas province in 1843.¹⁴ It took place in November 1975, and was legitimized, from a political perspective, as Havana's response to an appeal for help by a fraternal political party, the MPLA (Popular Movement of Angolan Liberation), with which the Cuban government had first forged ties when Ernesto 'Che' Guevara made contact with members of the exiled leaders of the then liberation movement in the early 1960's.¹⁵ However, the cultural motivation was set out by the Cuban premier about a month into the operation at the first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party: "And it was as slaves from Africa that many of our ancestors came to this land. And slaves, many who fought. And many that fought in the Liberation Army of our homeland. We are brothers of the Africans and for the Africans we are prepared to fight!"¹⁶

After gaining unprecedented access to archives in Cuba, historian Piero Gleijeses was able to put an end to earlier characterizations of the country's involvement as a 'war-by-proxy' on behalf of the Soviet Union. Not only did the freshly-unearthed documents prove the independence (and belatedness) of the decision

to send troops, but also appeared to corroborate the position maintained throughout by the Cuban government, i.e. that South African soldiers had crossed into Angolan territory prior to the arrival of their troops, and that, therefore, Operation Carlota had not arisen out of a simple response to MPLA leader Agostinho Neto's appeal for help, but to Pretoria's aggression. Later in the same speech, Fidel Castro depicted apartheid South Africa as the present-day heirs to Portugal's racist colonial legacy. After posing the question, "And who today are the representatives, the symbols of the most despised, the most inhuman form of discrimination?"¹⁷ he supplied the answer: "The fascists and racists of South Africa. And the Yankee imperialists, without scruples of any kind, despatched mercenary troops from South Africa to crush Angola's independence, and they are outraged that we support Angola, and they are outraged that we defend Africa."¹⁸

Even though there are obvious and various complexities at work in the choice of a rebellious slave to symbolize a former slaving nation, it becomes far less easy to dispute that South Africa was a pariah on the African continent, or that the apartheid regime was resolutely and universally detested within the black diaspora. Likewise, only a recalcitrant bigot (as Castro's words made clear) would long for 'the good old days' of African enslavement. Therefore, from both moral and humanistic viewpoints, Cuba was unequivocally 'good' against Pretoria and its allies, who personified 'evil.' Nevertheless, this unidimensional depiction of Cuban support for just one out of three Angolan independence movements-cum-political parties that was reflected in the equally one-sided historical narrative evoked by 'black' Carlota, splinters into shards of uncertainty when we consider the historical figure that served as a representation for the military campaign we are discussing here – António Maceo, a free-born mulatto man, who had been second in command of the Cuban Army of Independence during the wars

against colonial Spain in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹ And this is because the existence of sizeable ‘free black’ and/or colored populations throughout Latin America (mainly through a combination of Spanish and Portuguese laws of manumission and the *emancipados* scheme)²⁰ had led, by the beginning of the 19th century, to the blurring of racial lines, so to speak, creating not only ambiguousness in biological terms but, also giving rise to a widespread sense of mistrust at the socio-political level.

For example, in his insistence upon the complete abolition of slavery in Cuba, and not simply the limited offer of liberation for those enslaved who had fought in the independence armies (in other words his rejection of the 1878 peace treaty with Spain known as the Pact of Zanjón), Maceo was himself accused of inciting a race war or slave rebellion by his detractors, who regarded him with suspicion not least because he had spent time in exile in Haiti. Even though at the time of the military campaign that bore his name the revolutionary government had incorporated him into the pantheon of national heroes (albeit without mention of his mixed racial heritage), what I wish to suggest is that at an experiential level the socio-cultural context of the historical era in which he had lived – the dawning of the Cuban nation – continued to feed into an emotional ecology spanning centuries and crisscrossing the Atlantic Ocean.

3. Black Skin, White Manners

In order to anchor this notion in lived experience, let us first consider the social environment that the Maceo family inhabited in mid-to-late 19th century Oriente province on the eastern end of the island. According to census figures for the population of Santiago de Cuba, between 1841 and 1862, the percentage of free-blacks rose from 46,57 to 63,96, while that of the enslaved fell from 53, 43 to 36,03. Meanwhile, over the same period, the white population had grown more modestly from 21,49 to 26,23

percent of the total number of inhabitants.²¹ As Cuban historian, José Luciano Franco, described this milieu, “Thousands of free blacks and mulattoes made up the island’s craft industry. Many others were small business owners and traders. And some were devoted to the literary arts, education, or music. Socially they constituted a petit bourgeoisie with aspirations towards the improvement of their socio-political position.”²² Common cause between free and enslaved Afro-Cubans took some time to emerge, given the more pronounced sense of a ‘creole’ consciousness among the free population, as this excerpt implies.²³ If anything, families like the Maceos’ had the tendency to identify with (and forge social and political links with) colored populations in the wider region.²⁴ Olga Portuondo Zúñiga affirms, “Many mulattoes and blacks travelled back and forth between Haiti and Santiago de Cuba as if by cabotage.”²⁵ This is not to say that free and enslaved African-descended individuals circulated in completely differentiated social spheres, which would be far from the truth. Nonetheless, I propose that the alleged slave rebellion plot in western Cuba uncovered by the Spanish colonial authorities in 1832, known as ‘La Escalera’ or the Escalera Conspiracy, is what provided an important catalyst for unification at the political level.²⁶ Prior to that, such divisions that existed were more typically related to personal wealth. In *Biografía de un cimarrón*, the testimonial given by formerly enslaved Afro-Cuban, Esteban Montejo to writer and ethnologist Miguel Barnet, we find an interesting portrait of the division between rich and poor blacks in the town of Remedios in the late 1800’s that adds support to Franco’s description above:

The women of the town played the harp in their living rooms with the windows open for everyone to see. Then came the piano. But first was the harp. [...] The fact is that all these families: the Rojas’, the Manuelillo’s, the Carrillo’s, lived

among themselves. Business, parties and money. Gossiping wasn't their thing. Poor people, yes, because they lived closer together and more... The rich are rich and the poor are poor.²⁷

White foreigners who travelled to the archipelago in the wake of 'La Escalera' appeared to be captivated by the increased ethnic diversity, particularly among the non-black populations. In her study of free blacks in the Atlantic World, Michele Reid-Vazquez quotes Englishman, James M. Phillippo, who commented on the "extremely varied" character of its inhabitants, who included "Spanish, French, American, Italian, Dutch, African, Creole, Indian, Chinese, presenting every shade of color and variety of countenance that can be imagined."²⁸

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Ocean, a similar social composition existed in colonial-era Angola. As, Portuguese journalist Júlio de Castro Lopo describes:

The so-called civilised section of the population was a mutable and ambiguously defined society that barely even occupied the coast of Angola let alone colonised the interior of the territory - a community that encompassed Africanists of unknown length of stay in the territory, adventurers (some of them arrivals directly from Brazil), settlers forcibly tied to a life overseas due to financial obligations and various types of misfortune, missionaries and clergymen, convicts, soldiers and, mixed in with these elements of the populace, numerous mestizos, many of whom were already integrated into the social norms of the dominant Europeans, especially in the urban centres of Luanda and Benguela."²⁹

The Angolan author, António de Assis Junior, was born into a family of *assimilados*, the name given to the black and mulatto individuals who had been deemed to meet colonial Portuguese standards of ‘civilization.’ This sector of society comprised an ‘Atlantic Creole’ middle-class dating back to the seventeenth century;³⁰ but, similarly to the free-blacks in Cuba, although their levels of education and comparative status vis-à-vis other African-descendants were higher, they remained deprived of full integration into white-dominated colonial society. In his collection of essays entitled *Portugal and Africa*, historian David Birmingham describes the group as “Edwardian creoles, with their black skins and their white customs [who] formed an enclave on the Atlantic coast of Africa,” and “were notable lawyers, army officers, medical doctors, journalists, property-owners and civil servants.”³¹ Assis’s novel, *O Segredo da Morta* (‘The Secret of the Dead Woman’) is set towards the end of the nineteenth century, and thus gives a pertinent portrait of an African-Atlantic nation that correspondingly to Maceo-era Cuba was in the throes of transformation from a slaving system.³² I shall return to the emblematic themes of dying and disease that form the backdrop to this tale of “Angolan customs” later in this essay; but it’s sufficient at this juncture to signal their interconnectedness with the ideology of ‘whitening.’ Because just as Spanish colonial policy in Cuba reacted to the predominance of African-descendants by initiating a vigorous (and virulently racist) wave of immigration to the island by famine-stricken peasants, convicts and destitute workers from Spain, the Canary Islands, and to a lesser extent Ireland,³³ during the same epoch Portugal began to consider measures designed to increase the white presence in its richest African possession, without seeking to undermine policies to encourage settlement in Brazil.³⁴

In 1869, the Portuguese Minister for Justice, Rebelo da Silva, influenced by the viewpoint that Portuguese criminals had an essential role to play in the nation’s

civilizing mission in Africa, decreed that the wives and children of convicts were permitted to accompany them into exile. One of the principal objectives of this legislation (which was effective until 1932) was to stem the tide of so-called *cafrealização* or the impregnation of black women by Portuguese convicts which had contributed to a swelling mulatto population. Moreover, according to Angolan historian, Alberto Oliveira Pinto, the minister also mandated that Angola should receive the most serious criminals, such as fraudsters and murderers, with mitigating privileges assigned to those convicted of infanticide or patricide. Thus, in the late nineteenth century, chronicler Eça de Queirós once famously quipped that all that anyone wishing to visit Portugal's overseas territories had to do was simply kill their father.³⁵

I find that the German word *Götterdämmerung*, literally translated in English as 'twilight of the Gods,' exquisitely evokes this crossatlantic atmosphere of dying and emergent forces captured in an epic struggle that can be considered as the defining feature of the emotional ecology that we are discussing. A little way into *O Segredo da Morte*, Assis appears to enforce this idea through the close repetition of two descriptions of the sunset: first, "The sun kept tumbling towards the west, leaving in the air a sultry, stifling atmosphere."³⁶ followed a few lines later by "And the sun kept tumbling... endlessly tumbling towards the west, leaving in the air a stifling atmosphere."³⁷

4. Settling in

This image of an almighty tussle between waxing and waning forces matches to a notable degree the political context of the Cuban military operation to push South African troops back behind the national borders of newly-emancipated Angola in the early months of 1976 – Operation Antonio Maceo. On one side, the dimming potency of

the ultimate representative of white supremacist and segregationist politics on the African continent pitted against, on the other, the brimming anti-apartheid militancy and idealistic principals of ‘racelessness’ espoused by revolutionary Cuba and the MPLA. Anti-racism trounced xenophobia in this particular skirmish, and by late March 1976 combined Cuban and Angolan forces had arrived at the country’s southern boundary with Namibia.³⁸ Fidel Castro claimed the campaign to be a ‘bloodless’ rout of the enemy, a victory that was achieved psychologically rather than militarily. “We sent 36,000 men,” he explained, “because if we had to fight South Africa, which is a strong military power, we wanted to be prepared to defeat them. This was our philosophy. When they got wind of how many troops we were sending they got scared. Because theirs is a regime based on bravado: outwardly aggressive, but inwardly—morally and politically—weak.”³⁹ Leaving hubris to one side, what remains certain is that psychology constituted an important element not only in the withdrawal of the South African army to Namibia, but also in the aftermath of the campaign, by which I mean that the unprecedented Cuban victory delivered an all-important boost in morale to the global anti-apartheid camp.

In the course of his research on the Cuban internationalist mission in southern Africa, which resulted in his two major studies, *Conflicting Missions* and *Visions of Freedom*, Gleijeses came across a number of articles in the South African press that referenced Operation Antonio Maceo and its outcome. Two of the most compelling, that warrant our attention here, were published in mid-February 1976, once it had become evident that Cuban troops had gained the upper-hand. The first is an editorial that appeared in the major black South African newspaper, *The World*. It declared: “Black Africa is riding the crest of a wave generated by the Cuban success in Angola. Black Africa is tasting the heady wine of the possibility of realizing the dream of total

liberation.”⁴⁰ An interesting aspect to note in this example is how the victory is represented as unequivocally Cuban, with no mention whatsoever of the involvement of their Angolan FAPLA allies.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the second was written by a white South African military analyst and appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail*, a major white South African newspaper:

In Angola, black troops – Cubans and Angolans – have defeated white troops in military exchanges. Whether the bulk of the offensive was by Cubans or Angolans is immaterial in the color-conscious context of this war’s battlefield, for the reality is that they won, are winning and are not white. And that psychological edge, that advantage the white man has enjoyed and exploited over three hundred years of colonialism and empire is slipping away. White elitism has suffered an irreversible blow in Angola. And whites who have been there know it.⁴²

This excerpt leaves no doubt that at stake were not only two opposing political ideologies, but that Pretoria was fighting in defense of a way of life, one founded upon a settler colonialism that linked together the narratives of both the Angolan and South African nations. The former had been dealt a life-threatening wound in the wake of the 1974 Carnation Revolution, the military coup that brought an end to the Portuguese ‘Estado Novo’ dictatorship, and the latter found itself in peril of being next to succumb to the forces of allied left-wing revolutionary change.

For diverse reasons, some more apparent than others, settler colonialism can be considered the most challenging variety of colonialism to dislodge. Partly, this has to do with the form that settler colonial myths take in contrast with colonial narratives. The

latter typically share a circular structure which begins with a journey away from home, followed by an interlude characterized by intercourse with exoticized ‘others’ in a distant location, and finally a return to the point of origin. Settler colonial narratives, on the contrary, are configured around a straight line because, as Lorenzo Veracini writes, “no return is ever envisaged.”⁴³ He adds: “Colonial and settler colonial narrative forms emerge as structurally distinct. Colonialism reproduces cycles of opposition between civility and barbarism; colonialism immobilizes relationships and establishes a pattern of repetition. In marked contrast, settler colonialism mobilizes peoples in the teleological expectation of irreversible transformation.”⁴⁴ This idea of irreversibility offers a powerful means for comprehending the intransigence and “life-or-death” frame of mind shared by Cubans, MPLA, and South Africans, alike. Neither group was in a position to envisage a “return” to a former way of being. For, although the Cuban soldiers could –and (if they survived the war) would—eventually go back to the Caribbean, the narrative context in which they were operating was located within the continuum of their country’s historic revolution, which (according to revolutionary discourse) had changed their society into one that was, at least officially, anti-racist. Racism (and by extension apartheid) was, according to this teleological view, counterrevolutionary. Following the 1959 Revolution, therefore, there was simply no retreat imaginable in the face of reactionary white supremacy, whether at home or abroad, and therefore for Cubans and their MPLA comrades, the possibility that Angola could revert to racist pre-independence social and political structures was categorically precluded. Similarly, as far as Pretoria was concerned, white settler exodus from southern Africa was never an option, and thus neither ideological nor territorial ground could be ceded.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, what must be emphasized is that no matter the specific political ideology underpinning the denouement of the settler stories in Cuba, Angola or

South Africa, all were encased, at least historically, within the same emotional ecology, which, crucially in the context of our reading, was related to the policy of whitening. For, if colonial thinking on ‘progress’ would be “characterized by indigenous displacement and permanent subordination,” settler colonies, as we will see, set themselves towards “a measure of indigenous displacement and ultimate erasure.”⁴⁶

In the two months following the arrival of the first internationalist soldiers in Angola on November 4, 1975, the Soviet Union refused to support the Cuban air-bridge, in all likelihood as retaliation for the fact that Havana had presented Operation Carlota to Moscow as a *fait accompli*. However, after two successful large-scale military missions by Cuba, the Soviets started to flex their muscles, and Leonid Brezhnev ordered Fidel Castro to withdraw his troops at the conclusion of Operation Antonio Maceo. Moscow and Washington had already begun the delicate dance of détente in the preceding months, and under the Kissinger/Nixon policy of ‘linkage,’ what was perceived by the United States as Cuban adventurism in Africa threatened to ruin those early negotiations. Subsequently, a plan was drawn up by Havana for Cuban troops to pull out gradually between 1976 and 1978.⁴⁷ It would take another fourteen years for Cuba to complete a full withdrawal, however, and Operation Antonio Maceo, can be considered as more of a turning-point than an endpoint, as I will explain later in this essay.

5. Cultural Geographies of Independent Angola

Wars, like other catastrophic events, pose the biggest threats to natural and social environments prompting fears of irreversible and damaging change. When disaster strikes the most vulnerable it can appear as though a full recovery is impossible. So, how to sum up, without egregiously understating the mind-numbing violence and

dizzying socioeconomic upheaval involved in an armed conflict that raged (with intermittent interludes of armistice) from 11 November 1975 until 4 April 2002, that is to say for 26 years, 4 months, 3 weeks and 3 days? How to capture the day-to-day experience of grief, instability and confusion inscribed within a civil war that followed on from a 13-year long independence war, and resulted in the death of over half a million men, women and children? How indeed to make clear that the MPLA victory that Cuban soldiers facilitated was as much against native Angolans as it was in defiance of foreign incursion? The importance of such questions for our emotional ecology framing is brought to the fore when we observe that the Angolan civil war, which is essentially a story of *transgenerational* trauma (spanning from slave captivity to forced labor and colonialism to Third World liberationist movements), is often narrated in the Cuban and Angolan mainstream presses as a *transnational* trauma, shifting the focus in this way from history to geopolitics, and resilience offers insights into how these post-conflict narratives act as a potential bulwark against the different cultural geographies that threaten to destroy the idea of a singular national imaginary.

As far as Cuba's role is concerned, resilience operates through tropes that portray the internationalist mission as a self-sacrificing act based on an historical allegiance with a vulnerable sister-nation, and is rarely articulated as the politico-military collaboration with the MPLA that, in reality, it constituted. Through a focus on the Cold War context of Washington's support for (at different times) the two major opponents to the MPLA, i.e. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and Holden Roberto's FNLA (National Front of Angolan Independence), combined with an emphasis on the South African campaign to bring down the Neto-led government, the result has been a detour around the highly-charged cultural aspects at play. For, following five-hundred years of Portuguese dominance, it

goes without saying that beyond the struggle for political control, the war was fought for the very identity of the nation. Expressed differently, after the collapse of a heavy-handed colonial system enshrined in the principles of white supremacy that had granted limited social and economic advantages to a tiny population of ‘deracinated’ or ‘detrribalized’ or ‘Europeanized’ Africans, what kind of black African nation would (or even *could*) Angola become following independence? The answer would depend upon which of the three opposing groups held sway.

The cultural fault-lines marking the terrain between MPLA, FNLA and UNITA are brought into surprisingly sharp relief in *Independência de Angola, Parte II*, the elegant yet neglected documentary made by white Angolan filmmaker, Antonio Escudeiro, who was commissioned by the interim PREC (Processo Revolucionario em Curso)⁴⁸ government to record for posterity the transition from colony to independent nation, beginning with the Alvor agreements, signed in January 1975. And these divisions, the film makes apparent, also delimit the boundaries of three overlapping yet separately defined emotional ecologies rooted in different modes of living within a single national territory. Two aspects in particular are worthwhile for us to note. The first relates to the types of geographical space connected to the cultural identities of each of the political parties, and the second, somewhat relatedly, to how the bodies associated with each group (the leadership and supporters) behave and move within the depicted spaces. Thus, early on, the film shuttles between scenes surrounding the arrival of Agostinho Neto from exile in February 4, 1975, to the first official assembly of UNITA in Bié on February, 10 1975, presided over by leader, Jonas Savimbi, and then to Luanda on March 15, at a FNLA gathering.

Given that UNITA, with its connections to Washington and Pretoria, was the principal wartime adversary of the Cuban and Soviet-backed MPLA, and that it was

only with the death of Savimbi that the brutal conflict came to a shuddering and definitive end, our analysis will focus on key differences between the cultural identities of these two parties as seen in the film. In the MPLA segments, the mini-skirted and flared pants wearing supporters shown marching against a backdrop of sleek high-rise commercial and residential buildings, together with the concentration of moving vehicles on the streets, combine to create a visual context that is emphatically urban and animated. In contrast, the provincial setting of the UNITA meeting is easily recognizable through the dusty roads, and small-town air. Not to mention, the subdued crowd gathered sparsely in front of the decidedly unglamorous ‘Residencial America.’ Correspondingly, the MPLA drew its support mainly from the coastal, urban centers, and UNITA from the heartland and provinces. Returning to the MPLA segment, most of it was shot at the airport, where teeming hordes had gathered, a handful perched atop a Soviet tank, to hear Neto speak after disembarking from the commercial jet liner that had brought him home. In strong contrast, Savimbi was driven in from the bush, where his former guerrilla movement had been headquartered, in a dusty burgundy station wagon, his motorcade led by two white-helmeted Portuguese police officers on shiny motorcycles. In these differences we recognize similarities with the contentions around the question of which party could be judged as being the most authentic or the most representative of the Angolan people, and to this extent, a type of emotional cartography comes into play. UNITA, for example, sought to discredit the MPLA for having its headquarters outside of Angola during the independence wars, in contrast to its own leaders who stayed and suffered alongside ordinary Angolans who had neither the connections nor the means to flee the everyday cruelties of Portuguese colonialism. In fact, *sofrimento* (suffering) recurs frequently –still today—as a term that UNITA employs to capture the emotional dimension of Angolan indigenous history. On the

other hand, the MPLA's bid to be seen as the true representative of the people (in addition to claiming to be the first party to take up weapons against the colonizing forces – at least in the cities) was enshrined in the concept of national unity, which rested upon the principles of anti-racism and especially anti-tribalism, in contrast to the essentialism and xenophobia that it equated with the politics of Savimbi.⁴⁹

Even more importantly, resilience alerts us to a certain (unwitting, yet perhaps unavoidable) historical 'point-of-contact' between the detribalized African under Portuguese colonialism and the anti-tribal African espoused by the MPLA. This in turns forces us to acknowledge that Latin-Africa – the cultural and historical space surrounding the Cuban-MPLA political and military collaboration – held within its boundaries many similarities with colonial-era Spanish and Portuguese racial thinking. Put differently, Latin-Africa was where two related ideologies of race-mixing, *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem*, fused together and where the lived experience of demographic heterogeneity had to be emphatically and symbolically severed from any European root at the same time that it was subsumed to the common project of building a unified nation. For, as newly-liberated Angola experienced the need to assert its sovereign against the actions of aggressive neighboring states such as South Africa, neither the tribe nor the self-differentiating ethnic group could provide the basis of a strong, cohesive nation-state. The 1976 and 1980 constitutional revisions to the original 1975 Constitution clearly established the national goal of a revolutionary socialist, one-party state wherein that same party (the MPLA) acted as the true and only policy-making government body. All Angolans were thus implicitly declared citizens of a 'mestiço' (mixed) nation whose administrative presentation as a Marxist-Leninist state placed "class" ahead of any form of local or regional self-identifications along the lines of language, religion or ethnicity.

International relations analyst, Gerald Bender, reported in 1978 on what he saw as the special affinity between Cubans and Angolans during the internationalist mission: “The difference between Cuban-Angolan social relations and those of Angolans with advisers and technicians from other Socialist countries is dramatic. The Cubans work directly with Angolans, whatever the task. They seem immensely popular in the country, perhaps because they do not manifest the cultural and racial arrogance of many other foreigners. The Cubans, whose own lifestyle closely approximates that of Angolans, make relatively few demands on the government.”⁵⁰ Although committing the already-mentioned sin of eliding the MPLA camp with the Angolan nation as a whole, Bender, nevertheless, gives us a telling portrait of this Latin-African community that was facilitated by, on the one side (amongst other perceived traits), the Cubans’ “multiracial background” and “minimal ethnocentrism,”⁵¹ and, on the other, the fact that the MPLA was an urban political organization formed of black, white and mixed-race Angolans.

6. Operating against Antonio Maceo

During this time, the most important point of liaison between Havana and Luanda, beginning in the early sixties when he first met Che Guevara, was Lúcio Lara, one of the founders of the MPLA. A *mestiço* originally from Benguela, from photographs taken in the 1970’s, it is easy to discern that he was clearly influenced by the style, if not the political strategies, of Guevara. However, for MPLA minister of the interior, Nito Alves, it was the Argentine’s theory of guerrilla warfare that allegedly had the greatest influence. Alves was born and raised in the rural province of Bengo that cradles Luanda to the north, east and south. He and other members of his faction held the opinion that the MPLA, under Neto’s leadership, had become accustomed to operating

at a remove from the masses (which had started during the group's time in exile under colonial rule). Alves felt that they had lost touch with the needs and concerns of the general population, and that this was in large measure because Neto was little more than a black figurehead for a party that was effectively being run by whites and *mestiços*, such as Lara, who shared neither the life experiences nor the passions for social change of ordinary, black Angolans who made up the majority of the population. He, meanwhile, had started to make a name for himself inside the *musseques* (shantytowns) in Luanda for his informal style which included holding talk sessions, or 'groundings' as Rastafarians refer to them, with the local people. On May 27, 1977, the Nitistas, as his supporters became known, executed a plan to overthrow Neto and claim back the party for 'real' Angolans. The plan failed, and after the main ringleaders were executed, a reign of terror was unleashed as thousands of suspected sympathizers and supporters of Alves were hunted down and killed, first in the capital's slums, especially Rangel and Sambizanga, and then throughout the country. Their crimes? Plotting against the state, and racism. There was zero tolerance among the MPLA and its Cuban supporters for either one of these transgressions. Some witnesses reported that the role of the Cuban troops was to seal off escape routes to allow the slaughter to take place, while Portuguese diplomats reported that Cubans had opened fire on protesters on the day of the uprising. In her scrupulous investigation into the May 27th massacre, Lara Pawson discovered that the expression "they were sent to Cuba" ("*foram mandados para Cuba*") had been a coded way to say that those who were missing had been shot dead.⁵² Evidently, the internationalist mission had strayed far from the righteous path of anti-apartheid ("humanity's most beautiful cause" as Fidel had once referred to it), which Operation Carlota had once exemplified, into the less easily defined landscape of anti-racism. How had this happened? Resiliency theory would give the answer that the

actions and motivations of Cuban internationalist soldiers in Luanda were simply shadowing those of Cuban soldiers at home in Santiago several decades before, by which I mean the 1912 massacre of members of the Partido Independiente de (PIC) and suspected ‘sympathizers.’

PIC represented the first time that black people in the Caribbean – namely, veterans of the Cuban independence war – had organized themselves politically to fight for equality, social justice, and their full integration into the national project. After being founded in 1908, the party was declared illegal in the following year after then-President of the Cuban Senate, Morua Delgado, introduced a law that banned political parties based on race or class. However, in May 1912, PIC began to mobilize with a view towards regaining its lost legal status in order to compete in elections scheduled for that November. An armed demonstration took place to which the government responded by sending troops to neutralize the threat of what was portrayed as a ‘race war’. By the end of the military campaign, an estimated 6,000 Afro-Cubans had been massacred, whether these were directly connected to PIC or not, and never again since have black Cubans organized themselves to fight against racial discrimination or to challenge any aspect of the white-dominated power structure.⁵³

Our phenomenological approach to understanding Latin-African identity thus appears repeatedly to unveil experiences tied to fundamental themes of life and death, growth and decline, vulnerability and resilience. In turn, these revelations connect to the understanding that collective actions are often metaphors for states of mind, and that consequently they integrate psychological, historical, and social processes. Chief among the collective emotional processes rehearsed prior to and during Cuba’s internationalist mission in southwest Africa is the indirectly–expressed guilt and fear experienced subjectively by the white leaders of the Cuban revolution, some of whom (including the

siblings Fidel and Raúl Castro) hailed from the land-owning elites whose privilege was founded on the exploitation of black labour. This is another way in which the emotional ecology of the African Atlantic may be said to unfold in time as a transgenerational as much as a transnational story of colonial violence.

7. Dead Ends (A Conclusion)

Lucio Lara once claimed that, as youths, many members of the party leadership had identified closely with the portrait of Bahia in north-east Brazil that they encountered in the novels of Jorge Amado. This arouses the possibility that strong similarities likewise existed between *bahianidade* (Bahianess) and Latin-African identity, which, as we have seen, has its fullest geographical expression in the place of Antonio Maceo's birth, Santiago de Cuba. It also returns us to the beginning of this essay and our exercise to trace out the lines of connection among Africans and Afro-Latinos in the Atlantic Rim. As we have seen, one strategy that the Cuban government employed during the Angolan mission was to appropriate historical figures and re-contextualize them according to the prevailing conditions. Thus, the *palenque* leader 'black' Carlota was engaged to equate neo-colonialism and apartheid with colonialism and slavery in the early internationalist imaginary. Then, as the mission deepened and the civil war became more entrenched, the narrative of Latin-Africa disengaged from its earlier universalistic meaning and moved sharply towards a social and political alignment with Neto's MPLA. Another way of looking at it is to perceive the transition as a psychological need to shift from the question of why the Cubans had come, to why they had remained. That is to say that, by the time of Operation Antonio Maceo, they had become 'entangled.' The case that I wish to make is that in finding common cause with the MPLA leadership, certain mutual sociocultural reference points were engaged that linked back historically with

the urban experience in the colonial societies that we have considered, spaces in which the erasure (physical and/or social) of the free black/colored populations lurked as a constant threat.

In his lecture “Genocide: The Social Lynching of Africans and their Descendants in Brazil,” given at the Seminar for African World Alternatives that was held in Dakar, Senegal in 1976, black nationalist intellectual and politician, Abdias do Nascimento, emphasized the link in his country between the cultural concepts of mixedness or ‘racial democracy’ and the bio-socio-political project of ‘whitening’. “The political, economic, social and cultural repression experienced by the black people of Brazil is deplorable. Its ultimate objective is the obliteration of the black as a cultural, physical or ethnic entity. In the face of the racist, genocidal character of the ideology of so-called “racial democracy,” it would be irresponsible to fail to expose and roundly denounce the social structure supposedly based upon it.”⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Nascimento’s presentation took place in the middle of the Cuban military operation in southern Angola, as if calling our attention to the temporal continuities and geographical crosscurrents within the Latin-African experience, above and beyond the sociocultural. And, as his title reinforces, it is death itself that seems to inhabit the space (depicted as a dash) between the hybrid configuration of European and African, to wit, Latin(death)African.

But, in the drive to increase the white population in Cuba in the 1830’s and early 1840’s, what number of Irish and Canary Islanders succumbed to the harsh labor conditions in the tropical climate and the ravages of diseases, such as cholera?⁵⁵ Reflecting on the erstwhile popular idea that these two types of ‘islanders’ had more robust constitutions and were therefore hardier workers than other Europeans brings to mind the moribund effect of racial hierarchies to which Maceo, even after death,

himself became a victim. I am speaking of the anthropological study of his skeleton in 1900 by, as Aline Helg writes, “Cuban scientists, disturbed by the war hero’s African ancestry,” and who “stretched theories of racial miscegenation to prove that in Maceo the ‘white’ heritage predominated over the ‘black’ one.”⁵⁶

At their core, racial hierarchies function as categorizations of the value of human life. Therefore, as we have seen, in the Latin-African system black ‘elites’ play a complex role: they exist somewhere between their culture of origin (which is debased) and the European dominant class. Coming back to Assis’s novel, *O Segredo da Morte*, close to the beginning of the chapter entitled ‘A Nuvem’ (The Fog) an onset of sickness is quickly followed by the death of the same ailing character, a personal tragedy that appears to shadow the demise of trading in the Dondo area that had started in 1896.

The village, which, due to its port and navigability of the Kwanza, had become the center for products from Malanje, Cazengo and Libolo, cannot withstand the assault that had undermined her previous life.

Coffee farmers watched with amazement as the prices of their products dropped... while construction of the Ambaca railway line accelerated on into the interior, resulting in the diversion of products to other faster routes of entry.”⁵⁷

The sharp reduction in commerce experienced by the free black and mulatto community sets in motion a series of events that lead to great riches for one of the principal characters – through trickery, slavery and greed – but also sudden and inexplicable illness and death for her loved ones. Through these interconnected events, Assis seems to be saying that in both morally and climatically nebulous places, particularly those

steeped in the history and experience of African enslavement, healthy human connections of all kinds are unsustainable. And, on this point, Antonio Maceo, who died in the same year signaled as the beginning of the end in *O Segredo da Morte*, would no doubt have concurred.

By looking at the symbolic meaning of António Maceo in the Benguela military operation, we are reminded that in the ambiguous topography of Latin-Africa death is interwoven with the cause of black liberation to a singular degree, to the extent that in 1989, the name of Maceo was paired with yet another military operation related to the Cuban mission in Angola: Operation Tribute, the shipment back home of the remains of the internationalists who had died fighting abroad—mainly on African soil. On December 7, a ceremony was held at the General António Maceo mausoleum in Cacahual, where what still remained of 16 fighters, representing each of the provinces in addition to the Isla de la Juventud, was put on display for the public.⁵⁸ The day of the operation and ceremony was chosen to coincide with the date on which Maceo was killed in battle, which is commemorated as the National Day of Mourning (Día de Duelo Nacional). Lest we forget...

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¹ Nichols, Paul. "Emotional Ecology and People Development". 2001. <http://www.soul-chaplain.com/Emotional-ecology.html>. The term 'emotional ecology' was coined by

Frost et al (2000) to describe a specific 'climate' within a place of employment:

"Organizations create an emotional ecology where care and human connection are enabled or disabled. That emotional ecology can facilitate or retard compassionate action" (P. J. Frost, et al, "Narratives of compassion in organizations." In *Emotion in Organizations*. 2nd ed., edited by S. Fineman, 25-45. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications). Since then, the notion has become infused with broader ideas related to sustainability.

² Caribbean Studies in particular has experienced an ecological turn in recent years which has produced a rich vein of research exploring the interconnectedness of the natural environment, politics and aesthetics/cultural production. See, for example, Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett, eds. *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Elizabeth DeLoughrey and Jill Didur and Anthony Carrigan, eds. *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); and Lizabeth. Paravisini-Gebert, "Endangered Species: Caribbean Ecology and the Discourse of the Nation." In *Displacements and Transformations in Caribbean Cultures*, edited by

Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo, 8-23. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008.

³ Sunnie D. Kidd & James W. Kiddy

⁴ Ibid

⁵ W. B. Yeats, *Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1924), 266.

⁶ Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 158.

⁷ As an example of civil cooperation, Cubans were apportioned fishing rights in the abundantly provisioned waters of the Benguela Current. See Christine Hatzky, *Cubans in Angola: South-South Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge, 1976–1991* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 83.

⁸ At the closing ceremony of the first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party on December 22, 1975, Fidel Castro declaimed, “The imperialists aim to prevent us from helping our Angolan brethren. But we must tell the Yankees not to forget that we are not just a Latin-American country, but we are also a Latin-African country.” (Translation by author). Departamento de Versiones taquigraficas. “Discurso pronunciado por el comandante en jefe Fidel Castro Ruz,” last updated August 15 2016, <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1975/esp/c221275e.html>

⁹ George, *Cuban Intervention*, 106

¹⁰ James Walvin, *Atlas of Slavery* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2006), 115

¹¹ Rafael L. López Valdés, *Africanos en Cuba* (San Juan de Puerto Rico: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2002), 257.

¹² Palmares is reputed to have comprised an area measuring about one third of the land mass of Portugal, and was finally conquered in 1694. A number of historical studies

reference this black ‘republic’ and its famed leader, Zumbi, including: Glenn Alan Cheney, *Quilombo dos Palmares: Brazil's Lost Nation of Fugitive Slaves* (Hanover, CT: New London Librarium, 2014); Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 5th ed., (Bela Vista, S.P.: Martins Fontes, 2011) and; Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *De olho em Zumbi dos Palmares – Histórias, símbolos e memória social* (São Paulo: Claro Enigma, 2011).

¹³ In 1795, sugar production in Cuba stood at 14,000 tons. However, in 1856, the island was the top sugar producer in the world, with 359,397 tons, representing 25 percent of the market share. In the wake of the Haitian Revolution, plantation owners fled the island, heading to Louisiana and Cuba (especially the eastern part of the island), where their technological expertise became instrumental during the sugar boom between 1790 and 1820.

¹⁴ To give some context to the choice of name, “La gesta heroica del Triunvirato” (Triunvirato’s historic act) was the title of a conference organized by Cuban historian, José Luciano Franco, on August 27th, 1974 in Havana, to pay tribute to “the heroic men and women, suppliers of the sugar mill’s riches in the province of Matanzas, which was the scene of some of the most outstanding events in the rebellions by Afro-Cuban slaves in their confrontation with the cruel exploiters of their labour during the fourth decade of the past nineteenth century.” (Translation by author). “Rebelión de Triunvirato,” last modified July 2016, http://www.ecured.cu/Rebelión_de_Triunvirato

¹⁵ Guevara first mentions meeting leaders of the anticolonial movements in Portuguese Africa (including the MPLA) in his Congo diaries, *The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo* (London: Vintage Books, 2001). In the early 1960s, the MPLA headquarters were based initially in Conakry, followed by Leopoldville and then Congo-Brazzaville.

¹⁶ Y de África como esclavos vinieron muchos de nuestros antecesores a esta tierra. Y mucho que lucharon los esclavos, y mucho que combatieron en el Ejército Libertador de nuestra patria. ¡Somos hermanos de los africanos y por los africanos estamos dispuestos a luchar!” “Discurso pronunciado por el comandante en jefe Fidel Castro Ruz.”

¹⁷ “¿Y quiénes son hoy los representantes, los símbolos de la más odiosa, de la más inhumana discriminación?” Ibid.

¹⁸ “Los fascistas y racistas de África del Sur. Y el imperialismo yanqui, sin escrúpulos de ninguna índole, lanzó las tropas mercenarias de África del Sur para aplastar la independencia de Angola, y se indigna de que nosotros defendamos al África.” Ibid.

¹⁹ Cuba’s independence from Spain was won as a result of three wars: the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878), the Little War (1879-1880), and the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898). Antonio Maceo worked his way up through the ranks to become an officer during the Ten Years’ War. Still suffering from the racist controversy that erupted at the end of the previous war, he did not fight in the Little War; but was promoted to second-in-command of the independence army by general Máximo Gómez for the final military campaign.

²⁰ Following the establishment of the Mixed Commission for the Suppression of the Slave Trade in 1817, by which Britain sought to seize ships still engaged in the illegal activity and liberate the Africans that constituted the cargo on board, Cuba’s courts processed the cases of over twenty thousand African captives between 1820 and the mid-1830’s. As Michele Reid-Vazquez describes: “The majority of these men and women remained under the control of Spanish colonial authorities, many of whom represented some of the major slaveholders in the colony. In other words, instead of acquiring freedom, they were subjected to an ambiguous but highly exploitable status

between free and slave.” Michele Reid-Vazquez, *The Year of the Lash Free People of Color in Cuba and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 162

²¹ Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *Entre Esclavos y Libres de Cuba Colonial* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2014), 260.

²² “Millares de negros y mulatos libres constituían el artesanado de la Isla. Otros muchos eran pequeños comerciantes y propietarios Y, algunos, se dedicaban a las letras, a la enseñanza, a la música. Constituían socialmente una pequeña burguesía con aspiraciones a mejorar su situación socio-política.” José Luciano Franco, *La gesta heroica del Triunvirato* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2012), 5-6.

²³ The definition of a ‘creole’ or in Spanish ‘*criollo*’ carries several different permutations throughout the Americas. In this work, I am guided by the Cuban usage according to which the term applies to an individual that is Cuban-born, regardless of ethnic or racial origin.

²⁴ Maceo’s father was supposedly Venezuelan, and his family spent some time in exile in Jamaica.

²⁵ “muchos mulatos y negros iban y venían como por cabotaje entre Haití y Santiago de Cuba.” Portuondo Zúñiga, *Entre esclavos*, 257.

²⁶ The Escalera conspiracy (Conspiración de La Escalera) was an alleged large-scale slave rebellion in western Cuba uncovered by the Spanish colonial authorities in the early 1840’s. Whether an organized network of planned insurrection actually existed or not, the brutal response – torture, killings, and banishment – of thousands of Afro-Cubans (both free and enslaved) was unequivocal. Some of the luminaries of the free black and mulatto community in Matanzas perished in the slaughter, including the

distinguished poet, Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés), who, after a rigged trial, was executed by firing squad on June 28, 1844.

²⁷ “La gente rica era la que menos se ocupaba de los chismes. Com sus músicas y sus bailes se pasaban las horas. Y com su dinero, claro. Las mujeres del Pueblo tocaban el arpa en las salas com las ventanas abiertas para que todo el mundo las viera. Después vino el piano. Pero primero fue el arpa. [...] El caso es que todas esas famílias los Rojas, los Manuelillo, los Carrillo, vivían en lo suyo. Negocios, fiestas y dinero. Del chisme no se ocupaban. El pobre sí, porque vivía más unido y más... El rico es rico y el pobre es pobre.” Miguel Barnet and Esteban Montejo, *Biografía de un cimarrón* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 146

²⁸ Reid-Vazquez, *Year of the Lash*, 166.

²⁹ “A parte da população chamada civilizada, era sociedade flutuante e de definição equivocada, que mal ocupava sequer o litoral de Angola e ainda menos colonizava o interior do território – sociedade que englobava africanistas de permanência incerta no território, aventureiros (alguns deles vindos diretamente do Brasil), colonos forçadamente amarrados por necessidades económicas e contrariedades diversas a vida ultramarina, missionários e clergios, degredados, militares e, de mistura com estes elementos populacionais, numerosos mestiços, dos quais muitos deles integrados já nos hábitos sociais dos europeus dominadores, mormente nos centros urbanos de Luanda e Benguela.” Júlio de Castro Lopo, *Jornalismo de Angola: Subsídios para a sua História* (Luanda: Centro de Informacao e Turismo de Angola, 1964), 12.

³⁰ Some of these *assimilado* families, such as the black Van Dúnem’s, trace their lineage back to Dutch settlers who arrived in Luanda in the 1600’s.

³¹ David Birmingham, *Portugal and Africa* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 175.

³² Slave trafficking was abolished in all Portuguese possessions south of the equator in 1836, although slavery as an institution was not included in the decree, and indeed continued as an illegal practice until at least 1860, with evidence pointing to a continuation of many of its features under the guise of forced labour, although in many cases, little distinction existed between the two systems.

³³ Reid-Vazquez, *Year of the Lash*, 171. Spanish colonial officials classified Asians and indigenous Indians as white, demarcating them as biologically and socially, if not economically superior to black Cubans.

³⁴ The Portuguese government considered Brazil to be the easier option because of already well-established communication links in comparison with the far less-developed infrastructure in Angola. See David Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford University Press Birmingham, 2015), 60.

³⁵ Alberto Oliveira Pinto, *História de Angola: da Pré-História ao Início do Século XXI* (Lisbon: Mercado de Letras, 2015), 514-515.

³⁶ “O sol continuava tombando para o poente, deixando no ambiente uma atmosfera cálida, sufocante.” António de Assis Júnior, *O Segredo da Morta (Romance de Costumes Angolenses)* (Luanda: Edições 70, 1979), 42.

³⁷ “E o sol continuava tombando... tomando sempre para o poente, deixando no ambiente uma atmosfera sufocante.” Ibid, 43.

³⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013), 34.

³⁹ Ibid, 34.

⁴⁰ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 9.

⁴¹ FAPLA was the MPLA's military wing during the anticolonial war, officially transitioning to become the Angolan national army when independence was declared by Agostinho Neto in Luanda on November 11th, 1975.

⁴² Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 8-9.

⁴³ Lorenzo Veracini, "Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story," in *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture*, eds. Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 206.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 207.

⁴⁵ As Veracini explains, at times it is possible that settlers do return to the originating metropolis, but this occurs only when the colonial government falls, as in the Portuguese case. Veracini, "Telling the End," 210.

⁴⁶ Veracini, "Telling the End," 208.

⁴⁷ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 35.

⁴⁸ The provisional government held power from April 25, 1974 (the day of the Carnation Revolution) until new constitution and legislative elections took place on April 25, 1976.

⁴⁹ On December 6, 1960, the MPLA, the PAIGC (O Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde/African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) and the Goan League held a joint press conference in the House of Commons in London, where it was declared that: "Instead of considering the proposals for a peaceful solution to the colonial question, the Portuguese government is intensifying preparations to unleash a war. With an attitude of this sort, this government leaves only one alternative to the nationalist movements: the use of DIRECT ACTION (Translation by author)." As a result, the party laid claim to being the first of the Angolan liberation

movements to publicly state that armed struggle was the only means to liberate the Angolan people. (ANGOLA, Dar es Salaam: MPLA)

⁵⁰ Gerald J. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans, and American Anxieties," *Foreign Policy* 31 (1978): 10.

⁵¹ Ibid, 8

⁵² In addition to Laura Pawson, *In the Name of the People: Angola's Forgotten Massacre* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), details of the Cuban military's role in the events of May 27th, 1977 can be found in Dalila Cabrita Mateus and Álvaro Mateus, *Purga em Angola: Nito Alves, Sita Valles, Zé Van Dunem, o 27 de Maio de 1977* (Alfragide: Texto Editores, 2009); and also mentioned in the contentious and implacable report of murder and violence in post-independence Angola, Américo Cardoso Botelho, *Holocausto em Angola: Memórias de entre o cárcere e o cemitério* (Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2007), 381.

⁵³ George Reid Andrews, *Afro Latin America, 1800-2000* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford University Press, 2004). On PIC and the 1912 massacre, also see: Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina, 1995); Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina, 2001); 1912, *Breaking the Silence* (2013), film, directed by Gloria Rolando; Serafín Portuondo Linares, *Los Independientes de Color: historia del Partido Independiente de Color* (Havana: Editorial Caminos, 2002), among others.

⁵⁴ Abdias do Nascimento, "Genocide: The Social Lynching of Africans and their Descendants in Brazil," in *Brazil: Mixture or Massacre? Essays in the Genocide of a Black People*. (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1989), 90.

⁵⁵ Reid-Vazquez, *Year of the Lash*, 151.

⁵⁶ Helg, *Rightful Share*, 104.

⁵⁷ “A vila, que, devido ao seu porto e navegabilidade do Cuanza, se tornara o centro dos produtos de Malanje, Cazengo e Libolo, não pode aguentar o embate que estiolou a sua vida de então.

Os agricultores de café viram com espanto baixar as cotações das suas produções ... ao mesmo tempo que o caminho-de-ferro de Ambaca acelerava os seus trabalhos de construção para o interior, de que resultava o desvio dos produtos para outras vias de penetração mais rápidas.” Assis, *O Segredo*, 49.

⁵⁸ “Operación Tributo,” last modified August 15, 2016,

http://www.ecured.cu/Operación_Tributo